A TIME TO PRAY

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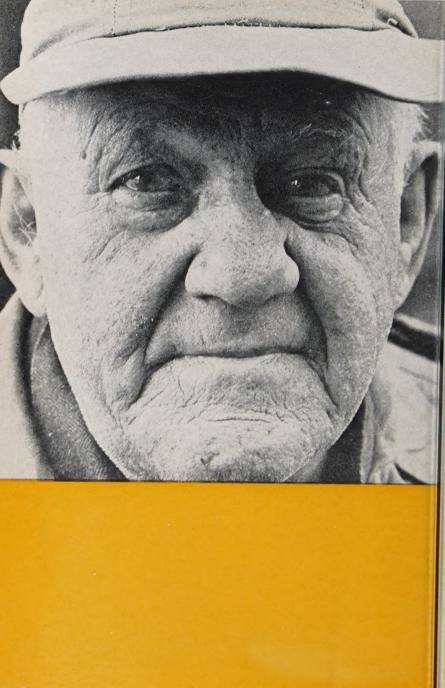
TALKING IN WORDS THAT ARE REAL TO ME

Dear God, do I have to talk to you in so called religious language? Do I have to talk to you about "safe" subjects which won't offend anyone? Or can I get under the veneer by which we manage to separate ourselves in the world, and talk about the things that actually concern me? Please let me talk that way, God, so that I can be real to you, and not have to filter everything through the strainer of religious and social appropriateness.

I know that I won't get many black and white answers when I talk with you, but I get the idea from past experience, that you know what it's like to live in the gray, and I guess knowing that you know makes it easier to wrestle with things.

Be with me, God, as I share my thoughts with you. You have promised to make me free. As the first step towards that freedom, may I be free in the way that I talk to you. Amen.





SEEKING THE THINGS THAT LAST

I saw an old man yesterday, God. He must have been 90 years old, all bent over and barely able to walk. But, Lord, my heart didn't go out to him in love or even pity. Instead, I felt a kind of revulsion. That scared me. What kind of a terrible person am I that I felt that way? I could have at least pitied him.

Could it be that I saw myself 75 years from now, and that it scared me a little? All the things that I count on to make me what I am can all be withered by age. My looks, my vitality, my health, my pleasing personality, my youth itself, these are all going to leave me someday. And then what will I be? Will I be an old person who can only attract pity, or worse, revulsion?

Maybe I need some deeper definition of myself, God. Maybe I need to do some searching as to what it is that really makes me, me. It's got to be more than the things I've listed, Lord, because they'll soon be gone. Please help me to know myself in a deeper way than I do now. Amen.



Dear God, are my feelings really me? And do you love those feelings in the same way that I hear you love me? It's hard for me to understand that. I just finished putting downeracy magazine, Lord, and I've got feelings I know you allove. I know that sex isn't bad in and of itself, but I always hear people talking about it's only being right in marriage. But I'm only 16, and I've got a long road ahead of me before I get married. What am I supposed to do with those feelings in the meantime?

Right now these sexual feelings make me feel guilty. I try to drive them out of my mind but they keep coming back. So they must be a real part of me, that you're supposed to love, but can you really love something that is supposed to be wrong?

Maybe, God, if you do love them as part of me, then maybe these feelings are not all wrong. Maybe it's what I do with them that counts. And if that's the case, could it be that shouldn't feel so guilty about these particular feelings?





BECOMING HUMAN AT ITS BEST

You know what doesn't make sense to me at all, Lord? It's those people who want to make our Christian religion equal to "being good." Somebody's mixed up, God, and for once I don't think it's me.

If "being good" is all that there is to Christianity, then the only people who are going to make it are the people I can't stand. They're in every church, I guess, and they seem so rigid that you can't get close to them. It seems like they're afraid that love might get sexy, that feelings might get nasty, and that searching might lead to doubt. So they close up their hearts and souls and minds, and don't let any light in. Aren't they the ones who are really living in darkness, God?

Maybe Jesus' dying on the cross never came through to them. I don't see how it could have. Can't they see that they honestly don't feel that they need a saviour? I KNOW I'll never make it by myself; that somebody like your son is going to have to help. But could it be, wonder of wonders, that I should be glad for my desires, negative feelings, and doubts? Could it be that your kind of love can lead me to a deeper relationship with all people, even those I can't stand? Could it be that the emotional feelings we have might make us understand in a way that our minds can't? Could it be that my doubts can lead me to discover truths that are real and right and all mine?

Thanks for making me human, God. And help me never to try to be more than human, because it looks like if I try to be, I'll only succeed in making myself less so. Amen.

MAINTAINING MY INTEGRITY AS A PERSON

She's fast, Lord, and I despise her. She has found a way to quick popularity and she's using it for all it's worth. I would never cheapen myself that way, just to have lots of dates.

But it's a funny thing, God. As I think about her, and how different from me she seems to be at first, the more I ponder it, the smaller that difference becomes. She has used a socially unacceptable means to gain favor. My way might be more accepted by society, but does that make it right?

Sometimes I feel very differently from other people in regard to certain issues. But I don't speak up with my convictions, because I am afraid they won't like me if I do. And I need to be liked so much. Sometimes I'll join in when the girls are tearing another girl apart, so that I'll be one of them.

Lord, the girl I despise is yielding her body to gain popularity. I guess I have to admit that I am doing the same thing with my mind and soul. Is her sin really worse than mine?

God, your son told people without sin to cast the first stone at the woman caught in adultery. Grant that in the future, I will not be so quick to run to the rock pile. Amen.



WANTING A FRIEND I CAN TRUST

If just occurred to me, God, that I don't have a real friend. I've been thinking over all the persons I know, and there's nebody on my list who can quality. There are lots of people I like, and some whom I think like me, but I have the (calling that that's about as doep as it does.)

Who sen I trust, Lord, to let him see me at I cally and I vin always gut to play little godes. Show a little, see how it a handled before I dark thow anymore. But there is no one with whom I can as dispose than the first few showing. They either tell must booken I feel that way, or try to explain my to ago a way, or just them alves away as I my malify frighten them. I snow that I'm not perfect. And I want humast with tim from papels I respect. Even so, can be people just accept me for what I am? Am I make that all because I feel beat coling friends must be to an one me? Continues communicate people can be me? Continues and because I feel that coling friends must be to an one me? Continues and because I feel share only friends.

God, mayber if you will be my triend, then I wan take it from those. Will you let me go beyond the first showings closen to where I really want to and need to communicate? Will you maybe scored or belongs for what they are and never pull many? I goes that I will have to believe that you will

Thank you. God, simply for santing to be my friend. Amon.





LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS

For the first time in my life that I can remember, I cheated, Lord. It wasn't a big thing, but I wasn't sure on one answer, and I looked at another paper, saw my mistake, and changed it.

God, so often I have the feeling that everyone is counting on me to be more than I am. My teachers and my parents are always telling me how smart I am, and how proud they are of me for making such good grades. I wonder if they would love me so, if I weren't as smart as they think. I wonder if they would rather that I be honest with myself or that I cheat so that I can live up to their expectations?

My life has become one of striving to reach other people's expectations. I know that I can't, and I know that someday it's going to catch up with me. It almost did today.

Lord, don't you think I have the right to do the best I can and be asked to do no more than that? Can't I learn to live according to my own expectations for myself, eather than theirs?

Dear God, help me to know what is my best and what is best for me. Then grant me the courage to be my own best self, despite what others might expect of me. Amen.

KEEPING FAITH THAT GOD IS LISTENING

God, people talk about periods of spiritual dryness. They say that if I can't feel your nearness sometimes, to keep working at it; that the dryness will pass if I don't give up.

Do you want to know something, Lord? I can't ever remember a period of "wetness." I mean, as hard as I have tried, I never get the feeling that is supposed to come to me. Am I hopeless? Are you really there listening? Please let me feel your presence just once, so I'll know what it's like.

Do you think, God, that I can go on, by simply believing with all my heart that you do hear; that it doesn't make any difference in terms of your listening, if I feel it or not?

I'll try it that way, Lord, but you surely aren't making it easy on me. Amen.



IN PRAISE OF JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING

God, we especially thank you for things that come in two's:

for things that are varied opposite paradoxical distinct

God, we praise you:

and for night
for flaming liberals
and for staunch conservatives
for male
and for female
for high church
and for holy rollers
for pleasure
and for trouble
for things black
and for things white
for intellect
and for emotion
for times of laughter
and for times of weeping
for peace
and for conflict
for RFK
and for LBJ

God, we give you thanks for just about everything!

-William T. Joyner





FORGOTTEN

You aren't forgotten everyday, Lord. I remembered you (Remember?) Today when that kid Ran in front of a car And yesterday When Mom was out late And we worried And last week When the neighbor's dog got sick Remember? Linhaled Oh God And exhaled Help him Help her Help it.

See? I don't forget you everyday.
Just remember when I...
You do remember today
yesterday
last week

When I...
Don't you?!

-Becky Schlemmer



Photo by Rohn Engh



ACTING WHERE IT COUNTS

For I was hangery and you go to have food.
"Why should I give my hard marned maney to help food all those people in Asia?" Let them take care of themselves."

I was thirsty and you got me drink.
"If they pass that hill to improve the items of the means and the improve the items."

I was a triming and you retend on the Party?

How I'm straig he wouldn't fit in.

I vernicked and you closhed ma,

Who we that at the trans discrit
"Some man collecting old cluther
for discrit in victime. I told him

did-'t have any. They'll have analigh
without sure. Bosiders i'm too they
to get from ready."

I was sick and you visited me.
"I meent to get dawn to the hosplant to the hosa get-well card. I didn't know It was

I was in prison and you came in ma.
"Our prisaches wents a group of us
to visit some all the prisoners of the
jail. He's crazy if he thinks I'm acting
to waste my time like that!"

to the needs of our fellowman? Do we serve him in times of need? Do our make action where it counts?

—Danny Atkins in Germany from Texas PEOPLE

They're what come streaming out of factory buildings at 4:00 p. m.; what you see walking hand-inhand through the park; what produces all the buzzing at baseball games. They're what designed the room you're sitting in and built the building it's a part of. They're what fight our wars, or what starve in unnecessary numbers throughout the world. Yes, people are lots of things and there are lots of them, but does one ever stop to focus on a person in the masses?

Each person is an integral number of such things as his community, his profession, his family. His life is filled with goals to strive for, standards to gain them by, and infinite emotions along the way. If one looks closely enough, he sees a very personal and complex being, sensitive to all that touches him, individual in every reaction. People aren't just a mass of unknown faces.

People. They're distinct personalities, each carrying the weight of his own life. They're valuable; they're intricate. They weave the masses. When they're treated with respect, they have a lot to give and they give a lot to love.

Diane Markham in Switzerland from Wisconsin



Photo by Ed Eckstein

Idea! Idea! Most important idea! Where are you?

Here I am. I am always with you, even to the

end of time.

Who are you?

I am who I am. I am love. I am Father of every idea, Son of all ideas ever offered, and Spirit of all ideas to come.

Oh! Excuse me, Lord ... Idea ... Sir. I should have known all the time. Am I supposed to offer my son, see a burning bush, build an ark, take a trip in a whale, be struck down by a blinding light, or something like that? You know that I've always wanted to do something for you. What about me as a prophet? Or, I might make a Reformation, if you really wanted me to. It is tradition, you know.

No! The road is paved. You must only follow the road signs that point the way of your

journey.

What do the signs say?

The first is that you shall love your Idea with all your heart (transplanted or not), body (black or white), mind (stupid or brilliant), and soul (only sinful souls are acceptable).

The second is like it. Love your neighbor as

yourself.

Who travels this road with me? Is it Methodists? Americans? the English speaking? those who live in Lone Star? Democrats? Socialists? Capitalists? Christians? Communists? Jews? or Buddhists?

NO! You walk alone! Each one walks alone! Only I, myself, will be with you until the end of time!

—Jim Smith, Jr. in Germany from Texas





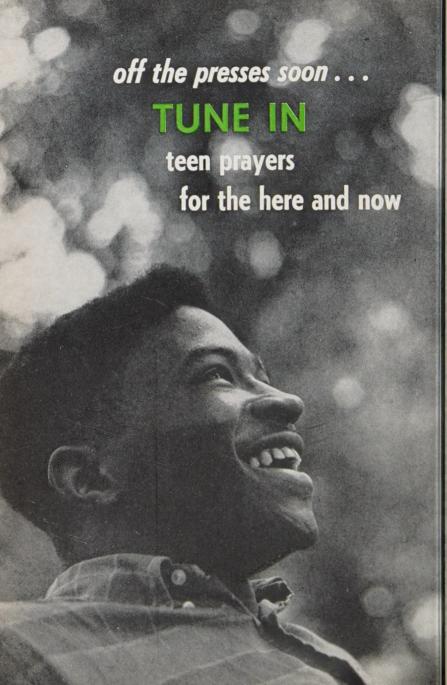


Life is so rushed and confused. If we could only slow down. To be alone. Just to think. Even meditate. Fach of us needs time to think out his thoughts by himself and for himself. In moments of silence we seem to be closest to something real perhaps it's God. Maybe it's not. Being alone can be fearful, too. We are embarrassed to sit in silence. What do we do? What do we say? Does it really do any good?

Being alone to think through your own thoughts can be helpful to you. Don't dwell moodily on your own weaknesses, but seek to understand why you do certain things, and why others do what they do. See the bigger picture and how you fit in. Involve God in your thinking. Make this think session a daily discipline. If you honestly see the value of it, in a matter of months it will become a habit, despite occasional lapses.

Find a guide to stimulate your daily thought. A recommended daily guide for you is *Power*, a quarterly magazine published jointly by six major Protestant denominations.

Power enables reflective thinking -those times when all that happens to us and all that we read into our being fit together. We test, select, reject ideas and feelings. Power is designed to be used when we are alone and musing about the meanings of life, the Christian community, the needs of persons, commitment to God, relations to other persons, and are deciding what actions we will take. The ministry of *Power* is to discern and expose the action of God in the world through meditations and consequently through its readers. Power strives to provide spiritual refreshment in the midst of engagement in mission. Power presents the kinds of questions and ideas we need to wrestle with in our private times of searching, so that we can go out into the world in ministering love.



The mystery of prayer has fascinated youth of many generations before you. Seeking counsel, courage, and comfort beyond their own families and themselves, youth have often experimented with oraying. In moments of prayer, hey confessed their own mistakes, embarrassments, and weaknesses, and were refreshed. In moments of prayer, thoughts often seemed leeper, more purposeful, and full of hope. Sometimes there was othing! Other times they seemed o be tuned in to something real, oving and promising.

For many, praying is one of man's most personal and meaningul ways of communicating with God. If God is the center of all ife, then every moment and every chase of our everyday life are cotential topics for prayer. And we don't need to use fancy words. The courselves to listen and to respond.

And since many of you have bund help in the prayers appearing frequently in Youth magazine, ou'll be glad to know that a collection of these prayers, plus many new ones, will appear in a cook entitled *Tune In*, edited by the editor of Youth. *Tune In* will be published October 15, 1968 by the United Church Press at \$2.95.

Prayers like the ones in this sue, dealing with everyday situators which young people face, will e included: dating, driving the ar, school, leisure, race tensions, ar and peace, vocational decision, neliness, phoniness, mission in e, morality and God, and many her life situations.

Reserve your copy of TUNE IN

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□ winter

fall

Start with Summer

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Are you deceived
By busyness into thinking
Life is hectic,
With little time for rest,
Relaxation, or reflection?

Has the habit of hurrying
Fooled you into believing
You haven't time
To read, to think,
To dream, to contemplate?

Books and magazines
Are lifelines into hearing
Creative artists
Liberate the commonplace
For new, significant meaning.

Beverly Welton